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## THE COMPOSITION OF THE *RUDENS* OF PLAUTUS

BY CORNELIA CATLIN COULTER

The problem of the relationship of Plautus to his Greek originals, which has interested Plautine scholars for two generations, has received special attention within the last few years. Careful analyses of the plays themselves have supported Terence's statement (*And. Prol.* 15-21) that Plautus "contaminated" (i.e., worked together the plots of two or more Greek comedies to make one Latin play). Both the *Miles gloriosus* and the *Poenulus* have been shown to contain two full plots;<sup>1</sup> the *Pseudolus* seems to combine the whole of one action with part of another;<sup>2</sup> and it is possible that the two scenes of the *Amphitruo* which introduce the *νῦξ μακρὰ* come from a different source from the rest of the play.<sup>3</sup> Strong reasons may be urged for adding the *Rudens*<sup>4</sup> to this list.

The scene of the *Rudens* is laid on the coast near Cyrene. A young Athenian named Plesidippus is in love with a girl belonging to the *leno* Labrax, and has already paid part of the sum necessary to obtain her; but Labrax is persuaded by another procurer to go to Sicily, and accordingly takes ship, with this girl and one other. A storm comes up just after they leave the harbor, their ship is wrecked, and the passengers barely escape with their lives. The two girls, Palaestra and Ampelisca, have taken refuge in a temple of Venus on the shore, and Ampelisca has won the heart of Sceparnio, a slave of the old peasant Daemones, who lives in a cottage near by, when Labrax and his companion appear. Labrax discovers the

<sup>1</sup> Leo, *Plautinische Forschungen*, 1895, pp. 153-67.

<sup>2</sup> Bierma, *Quaestiones de Plautina Pseudolo*, 1897; Leo in *Nachr. Gött. Ges.*, 1903, pp. 347-54.

<sup>3</sup> Leo in *Nachr. Gött. Ges.*, 1911, pp. 254-62.

<sup>4</sup> The suggestion that I, 1 and 2 did not belong to the Greek original was made by Kakrides (*Barbara Plautina*, 1904, p. 27) and accepted by Hueffner (*Woch. klass. Phil.*, 1905, coll. 712 f.); Leo (*Plaut. Forsch.*, p. 144) notes the "innerlich einheitliche, aber äusserlich zweigeteilte Handlung," although he holds Diphilus responsible both for the division of the action and for the essential unity of the play; and Langen (*Plautinische Studien*, 1886, pp. 205 ff.) and Sonnenschein (ed., 1901) comment on a number of difficulties in the plot.

girls and tries to regain possession of them, although they take refuge, first at the shrine inside the temple, and then at the altar outside. He is prevented, however, by Daemones and Trachalio, the slave of Plesidippus; and Plesidippus himself, being hastily summoned, drags the *leno* off to trial in the city on the ground of fraudulent action. Among the articles lost in the shipwreck was the *leno's* traveling-chest, which contained a casket of tokens belonging to Palaestra. The chest is recovered by the fisherman Gripus, the slave of Daemones, but is recognized by Trachalio, who happens to see Gripus bringing it to shore. Palaestra proves her right to the casket by describing its contents, and, with the aid of the tokens, Daemones discovers that she is his daughter, who was lost as a child. A little later, Labrax returns from the trial, claims the chest, and receives his property; and Gripus is appeased by the freeing of himself and Ampelisca.

To a student of *contaminatio* the very length of the play is significant. The *Rudens* contains 1,423 lines, one more line than the *Poenulus* and only 14 lines less than the *Miles gloriosus*. Moreover, the action is unquestionably divided into two parts: Acts I-III, the shipwreck of the two girls and the *leno*, and the attempt of the *leno* to regain possession of the girls; and Acts IV-V, the recovery of the casket which proves Palaestra the daughter of Daemones. The break between these two parts is clear and distinct. The action of Plesidippus in III, 6 has a certain air of finality, and the scene itself is so like the closing scenes of the *Curculio* and the *Poenulus* that it inevitably suggests the end of a play. Perhaps, too, one is justified in feeling some awkwardness in the exits and entrances at this point. There is no apparent reason for the departure of Daemones at l. 820, nor for his reappearance at l. 892,<sup>1</sup> and the girls, who at l. 880 have been taken into the house to await the return of Plesidippus, are brought out again at l. 1045 on the slightest of pretexts.

The division in the action of the play is emphasized by the comparative independence of the two halves. The first half of

<sup>1</sup> A monologue at the beginning of an act is natural enough (cf. Leo, "Der Monolog im Drama," in *Abhandl. Gött. Ges.* X [1908], 48 ff.), but the monody of Gripus (ll. 906-37) supplies a more suitable form of "Auftrittsmonolog" than the speech of Daemones in iambic *senarii* (ll. 892-905). The speech of Daemones forms a connecting link, since ll. 891-96 refer to earlier, and ll. 897-903 to later events of the play; but it serves no purpose beyond that of a connective.

the *Rudens* must be played before the temple of Venus on the shore near Cyrene, for action and dialogue are alike inseparably connected with that spot (cf. especially ll. 615, 629 ff., 713); in the second, the sanctuary of Venus, although mentioned in ll. 1286, 1332 ff., is not necessary, and any other city could be substituted for Cyrene. On the other hand, although it is stated in ll. 738 ff. (cf. l. 605 *popularibus*) that both Daemones and Palaestra were born in Athens, this statement is not essential to the early part of the play, and assumes importance only in the recognition-scene in Act IV.

Then, too, certain characters connected with one part of the play are absent from the other. Of the two slaves of Daemones, Sceparnio appears only in Acts I and II, and Gripus only in Acts IV and V.<sup>1</sup> Charmides, the companion of Labrax, is prominent in the first three acts, but has no part in the action after l. 891, and (except perhaps for the corrupt sentence in ll. 1307 f.<sup>2</sup>) is not even alluded to in the latter part of the play. It is significant, too, that Ampelisca, who is of equal importance with Palaestra in the first part of the play, is almost ignored in the last two acts.<sup>3</sup>

A careful reader of the *Rudens* will notice a number of passages connecting the two parts of the play. These passages, however, are so limited in extent, and, at times, so awkwardly introduced, that they suggest intentional additions rather than integral parts of the scenes in which they appear. The disclosure of the parentage of Palaestra is prepared for by ll. 106, 388-98, 649, 714, and 736-51. The information of l. 106:

filiolam ego unam habui, eam unam perdidit,

is quite gratuitous, inasmuch as Plesidippus has just met Daemones, and is interested only in the whereabouts of Labrax, not in the family of his new acquaintance. In ll. 388-98, after Trachalio has asked to be taken to Palaestra, Ampelisca detains him with an account of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sonnenschein, note on Act IV, scene 1.

<sup>2</sup> The sentence is given in the manuscripts in the form *hac proxima nocte in mari et alii confracta est navis*. Some editors read [*mi*] *et alii*; but it is so unlike Labrax to mention Charmides or anyone else at this point, that we may assume that *et alii* is corrupt.

<sup>3</sup> Ampelisca speaks only one sentence (l. 1183) after the close of Act III, and is addressed or mentioned in nine short passages, none of which has any vital connection with the plot, and some of which introduce actual contradictions (ll. 892 ff., 1045 ff., 1104 ff., 1113 ff., 1129, 1183, 1220, 1286 f., 1405 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Leo, *Plaut. Forsch.*, p. 145.

On the whole, therefore, these connecting links offer no obstacle to the theory of *contaminatio*. In fact, the story of Palaestra's birth introduces difficulties which support this theory. When Ampelisca tells Trachalio about the casket which would enable Palaestra to find her family, his indignant exclamation (ll. 393 f.):

o facinus inpudicum,  
quam liberam esse oporteat, servire postulare!

would indicate that, up to that time, he knew nothing about her birth. Later, however, he boldly makes the statement that both girls are free-born, and that Palaestra is an Athenian citizen (ll. 736 ff., cf. 1104 f.). We might have expected Palaestra to tell her lover the secret before, in the hope of finding her parents through him;<sup>1</sup> and in any case Trachalio should have shared the news with Plesidippus immediately, as Milphio reports a similar bit of news to Agorastocles (*Poen.* 961 ff.). But although Trachalio has ample time to talk with Plesidippus, in the interval between l. 779 and l. 839, and although he has given him a detailed account of the scene before the temple (cf. ll. 839 ff.), he has apparently said nothing about the family of Palaestra; for, instead of making the ground of his suit the detention of a free-born girl (cf. *Persa* 745 ff., *Poen.* 1343 ff.), Plesidippus bases his legal action merely on the fraud that Labrax has tried to practise (ll. 860 ff.).<sup>2</sup>

The mention of Ampelisca in ll. 736 ff. and 1104 gives rise to another discrepancy. Although the statement is made in these passages that *both* girls are free, the recognition-scene is concerned with Palaestra alone, and the manumission of Ampelisca is planned at the end of the play without a hint that she is free-born.

We note inconsistencies, too, in the few facts that are told us about Plesidippus. That he is an Athenian, we learn from l. 1198; but why this Athenian youth should be living at Cyrene, and in love with a girl who is regularly established there, is far from clear.<sup>3</sup> We are also informed, after the recognition of Palaestra by her father, that the father of Plesidippus had been an acquaintance of Daemones, and that the two were related (ll. 1198, 1214). At the beginning of

<sup>1</sup> Langen, pp. 209 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>3</sup> Sonnenschein, *Introd.*, p. vi, note 2.

the play, however, Plesidippus and Daemones have met as strangers, and in no part of the dialogue before l. 1198 has there been a suggestion of any previous connection between them.

This same part of the play presents difficulties in chronology. In l. 1217, Trachalio refers to a previous conversation with Daemones (of which there is not a trace in our play) in which Daemones promised to secure the slave's liberty. Again, we must assume that a trip to the city and a lawsuit there took some time. No matter how close to the city we may locate the temple of Venus, the interval between l. 891 and l. 1265 or l. 1281 is much too short for Plesidippus and Labrax to go to Cyrene, present their case, and return to the temple again.<sup>1</sup>

All these considerations—the distinct break in the action in the middle of the play, the insufficient attempts to bind together the two halves, and the discrepancies in time and action—suggest that the *Rudens* combines the plots of two Greek plays. The scene of the first was undoubtedly Cyrene. In it, a young man, presumably a citizen of the place, was in love with a girl in the service of a *leno*, and had paid part of her cost, but was defrauded by the *leno*, who set sail for Sicily with this girl and one other. The ship was wrecked, and the girls, escaping, took refuge in the temple of Venus. The *leno* followed them ashore, and tried to get possession of them, but was prevented by a peasant who lived near by, and by the slave of the first girl's lover. The lover was summoned by the slave, and took the *leno* off to court on grounds of fraud.<sup>2</sup>

The second play must also have taken place on the seacoast, but not necessarily in the vicinity of Cyrene. In this play, too, a *leno* was shipwrecked, together with one slave, an Athenian girl who had been stolen as a child, but who still retained the casket of tokens proving her identity. The trunk containing this casket was lost in the shipwreck, but recovered by the slave of a man who had

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Langen, p. 208. To solve all these difficulties in chronology, Sonnenschein assumes (without, however, quoting a parallel from any other comedy) that at least a day elapsed between l. 1190 and l. 1191. See his notes at the beginning of IV, 5, and on ll. 1198, 1217.

<sup>2</sup> The fate of Ampelisca is left in doubt. The scene with Sceparnio (II, 4) hints at a romance, but there is no indication that this hint was followed up in the Greek original. In any case, the request of Trachalio for her hand (l. 1220) and her manumission by Labrax (ll. 1405 ff.) are probably original with Plautus.

befriended the young woman, and through the *crepundia* she was discovered to be the daughter of her benefactor. The girl's lover, likewise an Athenian, proved to be a kinsman as well, and the play (like the *Καρχηδόνιος*, which Plautus embodied in the *Poenulus*) ended with a family reunion and a happy marriage.

In writing the *Rudens*, Plautus combined the whole of the first plot with the greater part of the second, omitting, however, the scenes of the Greek original which would have explained the relationship of Daemones and Plesidippus. The prologue, which must have been adapted by Plautus from the first Greek original, introduces the combined play, giving the setting of the first plot, with some preliminary events leading up to the first scene, and some details from the second plot (ll. 32 ff.). It is, however, a scene from the second plot, the struggle between the two slaves for the possession of the trunk (IV, 3) that gives the name *Rudens* to the play.

In the proportion in which the two plays are combined, the *Rudens* reminds us most strongly of the *Pseudolus*; but it far surpasses the *Pseudolus* in dramatic technique. The two parts of the plot present comparatively few inconsistencies, and the number of connecting threads is much larger than in any other of the contaminated plays. We may assume, therefore, that the *Rudens* dates in the poet's later period; that, at the time that it was written, Plautus had passed beyond the stage of crude workmanship represented by the *Miles* (ca. 204 B.C.), and had gained some skill in the management of a complex plot.

If this analysis of the *Rudens* is correct, and if only the first part of the play is connected with Cyrene, then it is for this first part alone that Diphilus is responsible (cf. ll. 32 f. *huic esse nomen urbi Diphilus Cyrenas voluit*). The second Greek original probably had a different setting, and may well have been written by a different author. As a matter of fact, it is only in the first half of this play that we find the traits most characteristic of Diphilus. His nearness to Middle Comedy is illustrated by the chorus of fishermen<sup>1</sup> (ll. 290 ff.), and by the many literary and mythological allusions<sup>2</sup> (some of them obscure) in this part of the play: the *Alcumena* of Euripides (l. 86); Palaemon,

<sup>1</sup> Schoell, ed. (1887), Praef., p. viii.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Schoell, p. viii.



the comrade of Neptune and friend of Hercules (ll. 160 ff.); Libertas, who was unwilling ever to take ship with Hercules (ll. 489 f.); Thyestes and Tereus (l. 509); Philumela and Procne (l. 604); Vulcan, the enemy of Venus (l. 761); and Hercules *claviger* (l. 822). There is an almost tragic tone about the lyrics of Palaestra and Ampelisca (ll. 185 ff.); the figure of the priestess Ptolemaecratia is one of great dignity<sup>1</sup> (ll. 258 ff.; cf. 406 ff.); and the motives of the suppliants at the altar and the prophetic dream are taken direct from tragedy.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the scenes of conflict with the *leno* (III, 4-6) exhibit the same violence as the scene of the *Adelphoe* (II, 1) which Terence tells us he owed to Diphilus. The latter part of the play is very different in tone. Mythological allusions disappear; tragic motives (except for the ἀναγνώρισις) are neglected; and lively action gives place to quibbling and tedious discussions (cf. especially IV, 6, 8, and the first part of 4).

This analysis also throws some light on the title of the play of Diphilus from which Plautus drew. It has been generally assumed heretofore that this title had some connection with the *vidulus* of the *leno*. But since the *vidulus* plays a part only in the latter half of the *Rudens*, we need not search among the works of Diphilus for a Πῆρα<sup>3</sup> or a Κίσση<sup>4</sup> or assume that he wrote a second Σχεδία on the same theme as the original of the *Vidularia*.<sup>5</sup> The most appropriate title would be one referring to the shipwreck or the rescue of the girls. Unfortunately, however, the one title which might contain such a reference (the Ἀνασωζόμενοι<sup>6</sup>) appears in the masculine gender; and neither of the fragments quoted from this play can be identified with lines in the *Rudens*.

ST. AGNES SCHOOL  
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<sup>1</sup> Schoell, p. viii.

<sup>2</sup> Leo, pp. 144 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Schoell in *Rhein. Mus.* XLIII (1888), p. 298.

<sup>4</sup> Hueffner, *De Plauti Comoediarum Exemplis Atticis*, 1894, p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Studemund, *Über zwei Parallelkomödien des Diphilus*, 1882.

<sup>6</sup> Suggested by Francken in *Mnem.* III (1875), p. 34, but rejected by Schoell (p. viii).